

THIS MONTH

We all know that computer equipment gets cheaper and quicker over time, but that's usually a slow generational process. We certainly don't expect the newest technology to be cheaper than the existing range, but that's exactly what Intel has managed with its Core 2 Duo E6750, reviewed on page 52. For just £117 you get a brand new processor that supports the faster frontside bus speed of 1,333MHz. Surprisingly, it's 40 per cent cheaper than the old 1,066MHz FSB Core 2 Duo E6700. This makes it absolutely astounding value and by far the best-priced processor we've ever reviewed.

That's not the only bargain we've got. Canon's HV20 camcorder is the first budget HD camcorder we've seen to support progressive scan. This helps it produce cleaner, sharper images, while video moves more smoothly. Find out more on page 42.

If money's no object, though, read our Toshiba Qosmio G40-10E review, right. This stunning notebook has an amazing 17in screen with a resolution of 1,920x1,200 and can play back HD DVDs, too. It's one of the best entertainment notebooks we've reviewed, but it is pricy at £1,899 including VAT.

David Ludlow
Deputy Editor

david@computershopper.co.uk



TOSHIBA

Qosmio G40-10E

★★★★★

£1,899 inc VAT

Tohisba's Qosmio G40-10E is an entertainment notebook that can replace your TV, Freeview recorder, DVD player, games console and stereo system, as well as undertaking most computing duties. It can also play HD DVD movies.

Its 17in widescreen display has a huge native resolution of 1,920x1,200 pixels, so HD DVD movies, which have a resolution of 1,920x1,080, can be shown without any downscaling. The results are fantastic, with movies appearing noticeably more detailed when compared to our 720p television. The display also did well in our technical display tests, with a smooth greyscale and vibrant colours. Horizontal viewing angles are poor compared to a proper HD TV, though, so it's not ideal for more than two viewers.

The rest of the notebook is just as striking. Flanking the keyboard is a pair of circular controls. The right-hand one is a four-way directional control that's perfect for navigating Windows Media Center, and it has a touch-sensitive scroll area similar to an iPod. The left-hand one rotates to control the volume. Above these is a pair of stylish speaker ports, with two more hidden either side of the screen, plus a subwoofer on the underside of the chassis. Audio quality is excellent, with well-balanced sound and great clarity. It's a pity it's not a little louder, but there's no distortion at top volume.

The G40 weighs 4.4kg and is 440mm wide, so it's unsuitable for mobile use. The battery lasted for a respectable two hours and 55 minutes in our light-usage test. Don't try and watch a HD DVD away from the mains, though, as the processing power required will drain the battery in just over an hour.

The built-in hybrid tuner will pick up both analogue and Freeview broadcasts. The TV tuner works with Windows Media Center,

This month What's New Contents

											
PC Systems & Notebooks		20		Printers & Scanners		page 32		Photography		page 38	
Acer Aspire 5101AWLMi		★★★★★		Canon PIXMA iP4300		★★★★★		BenQ T700		★★	
CyberPower Media Centre 900 Series		★★★★		Canon PIXMA MP160		★★★★★		Canon EOS 400D		★★★★★	
Gateway MX8716b		★★★★		Canon PIXMA MP510		★★★★★		Canon PowerShot A630		★★★★★	
Lenovo ThinkPad X60s		★★★★★		Canon Selphy CP740		★★★★		Fujifilm FinePix F20		★★★★★	
Medion Maximum Performance Multimedia PC		★★★★★		Epson Perfection V100 Photo		★★★★★		Nikon Coolpix L11		★★★★	
Mesh Elite E6600 R600		★★★★★		HP LaserJet P2014		★★★★★		Olympus mju 780		★★★★★	
RL Supplies Modula 4400 OC		★★★★★		HP Photosmart D7160		★★★★★		Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ50		★★★★★	
Rock Meivo		★★★★★		Konica Minolta Magicolor 2500W		★★★★★		Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ2		★★★★★	
Toshiba Qosmio G40-10E		★★★★★		Lexmark X9350		★★★★		Samsung S1050		★★★★	
Handhelds		page 30		Samsung ML-2510		★★★★★		Video		page 42	
Archos 404 Camcorder		★★★★		Displays		page 36		Canon HV20		★★★★★	
HP iPaq 514 Voice Messenger		★★★★★		Dell 1800MP		★★★★★		Canon MD101		★★★★★	
HTC Touch		★★★★★		HannsG HW223DP		★★★★★		Sanyo Xacti CA65		★★★★	
Nokia E65		★★★★★		Hitachi Illumina PJ-TX300		★★★★★		Sling Media Slingbox		★★★★★	
TomTom One Regional		★★★★★		Iiyama E1900S		★★★★★		Terratec Cinergy DT USB XS Diversity		★★★★★	
Toshiba Portégé G900		★★★★★		LG 32LC2D		★★★★★		Top Up TV TUTV Anytime DTR		★★★★★	
				Mirai DML-519W100		★★★★★		Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ2		★★★★★	
				Sony VPL-EX4		★★★★★		Samsung S1050		★★★★	
				ViewSonic VX2255wmb		★★★★					



which is supplied as part of the Windows Vista Ultimate edition installation. The Toshiba HD DVD playback software is integrated into the Media Center interface, which is a nice touch.

If you want to record TV programmes, there's a big 250GB hard disk inside. This will also give you plenty of space for your audio and photo files. The HD DVD-R drive can burn HD DVD writable media; however, this could cost you as a single 15GB disc costs around £7. It's currently an expensive way of making backups, although prices are bound to fall with time. Fortunately, the drive also writes to inexpensive DVDs as well.

There are loads of ports around the chassis' edges. The five USB2 ports should be sufficient for most needs, and there's a memory card reader, two expansion slots for PC cards and a FireWire port. A Gigabit Ethernet port is provided, and the wireless networking card supports the new Draft-N standard.

If you need to use an external display, there's an HDMI output. This can also carry surround-sound audio to a suitably equipped amplifier or HD TV. There's an S-video output for CRT televisions, but unlike previous Qosmio models there's no SCART output.

The Qosmio is fast in applications and can take on tough tasks. Its high-resolution display is particularly handy when it comes to running complex applications. It did respectably in 3D, too, with a playable frame rate in our Call of Duty 2 test. It's not quick enough to run the latest games with high detail settings, though, so hardcore gamers should look elsewhere.

This is a very impressively specified and equipped notebook, but it's expensive, not least because of the HD DVD drive, which doesn't have a guaranteed future. We'd prefer a model that doesn't have this drive, but Toshiba, sadly, doesn't produce one.

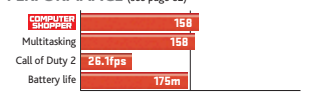
Seth Barton

SUMMARY

- ✓ HD DVD playback
- ✓ High-resolution display
- ✗ Very expensive

NOTEBOOK PC 2.0GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T7300, 2GB RAM, 250GB hard disk, Nvidia 8600M GT graphics, HD DVD-R drive, 17in LCD widescreen, weighs 4.4kg
PART CODE PQG40E-00D018EN
SUPPLIER www.microanvika.com
DETAILS www.toshiba.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



PC SYSTEMS & NOTEBOOKS

FAQ

Q I'm running Windows on my Intel Mac using Apple's downloadable Boot Camp utility, but tasks that involve hard disk access are very slow. How can I fix this?

A Unfortunately, due to a Boot Camp bug, data transferred between the hard disk and RAM may be done using Programmed Input/Output (PIO) instead of Direct Memory Access (DMA) mode. Both PIO and DMA are methods of transferring data from the hard disk to the rest of your computer, but DMA is much faster and more efficient than PIO.

You can check which is in use with Windows' Device Manager. Under the IDE ATA/ATAPI entry, double-click the icons for IDE Channel. In the Advanced Settings tab, the Transfer Mode menu should be set to DMA or an Enable DMA tick box should be ticked. If this doesn't work, try updating to the latest version of Boot Camp.

Alan Lu
PC systems and storage expert



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Audio page 44

Apple iPod Shuffle	★★★★★
iRhythms A-211	★★★★★
Logitech AudioStation	★★★★★
Logitech X-230	★★★★★
Logitech Z-5450	★★★★★
Philips SLA5520	★★★★★
Sandisk Sansa e270	★★★★★
Scandyna Micropod SE Active	★★★★★
Terratec Noxon Z radio for iPod	★★★★★

Networks page 46

Billion BiPAC 7300G	★★★★★
Buffalo Wireless G Broadband ADSL2+ Modem Router	★★★★★
D-Link DHP-301	★★★★★
Linksys WAG325N Wireless-N ADSL Gateway	★★★★★
Senao NET-EL-ECB-8610	★★★★★
Sling Media SlingLink Turbo	★★★★★
US Robotics Wireless Ndx Router	★★★★★

Storage page 48

Acer Altos EasyStore 2TB	★★★★★
Buffalo DriveStation Combo 500GB	★★★★★
Crucial 1GB Gizmo! Overdrive	★★★★★
LG GSA-H55N	★★★★★
Pioneer BDC-202	★★★★★
Samsung SpinPoint T166-HD501LJ	★★★★★
Seagate Barracuda 7200.10 Ultra ATA/100 500-GB Hard Drive	★★★★★

Components page 50

AOOpen Aeolus G325	★★★★★
Asus P5K Deluxe/WiFi-AP	★★★★★
ECS G33T-M2	★★★★★
Gigabyte GA-965P-DS3P (Rev 3.3)	★★★★★
Gigabyte GA-P35T-DQ6	★★★★★
Intel Core 2 Duo E6700	★★★★★
Intel Core 2 Duo E6750	★★★★★
Intel Core 2 Extreme QX6850	★★★★★
MSI K9AGM2	★★★★★
Shuttle XPC SD32G2	★★★★★

Software & Games page 54

Acronis True Image 10 Home	★★★★★
Adobe Creative Suite 3 Design Premium	★★★★★
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 1.0	★★★★★
Avanquest Perfect Image 11	★★★★★
Colin McRae: Dirt	★★★★★
Company of Heroes	★★★★★
Corel Ulead Video Studio 11	★★★★★
FIFA 2007	★★★★★
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	★★★★★
Hospital Tycoon	★★★★★
Lord of the Rings: Shadows of Angmar	★★★★★
Magix Xtreme Photo, Video & Graphic Suite	★★★★★
Microsoft Expression Web	★★★★★
Monster Madness: Battle for Suburbia	★★★★★
OpenOffice OpenOffice.org 2.1	★★★★★
Pinnacle Studio 11 Ultimate	★★★★★
Roxio Easy Media Creator 9 Suite	★★★★★
Senif AlbumPlus X2	★★★★★
Steganos AntiVirus 2007	★★★★★
Supreme Commander	★★★★★
Transformers: The Game	★★★★★

BYTE SIZE

OVERBOARD Small Waterproof Phone Case

★★★★★

£13 inc VAT

If watersports are a regular part of your weekend activities, your mobile phone could be in trouble. Fortunately, OverBoard's waterproof cases can help. They come in a range of sizes to fit phones, cameras, MP3 players and GPS systems.

The front is clear plastic, so you can see what's going on and we successfully made calls with a phone inside the case. Voices were muffled but still comprehensible. No water penetrated the case in our tests.

The case doesn't feel like it will stand up to years of constant use, but for occasional water-borne adventures it's ideal.

Seth Barton

SUPPLIER www.fonejuice.co.uk
DETAILS www.over-board.co.uk



BELKIN Concealed Surge Protector

★★★★★

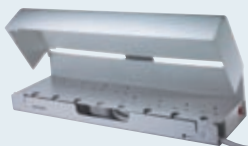
£30 inc VAT

The large number of cables in multi-way adaptors can look messy and get tangled. Belkin's Concealed Surge Protector is an eight-socket gang plug with a hinged lid that keeps all your plugs neatly tucked away. The sockets are arranged so as to fit almost any power adaptor.

The built-in surge protector is guaranteed to protect your equipment from electrical damage. There are also protected sockets for your phone and aerial leads. It's a well thought-out product, but normal eight-socket surge protectors are available for around half the price.

Seth Barton

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.belkin.com



GATEWAY MX8716b

★★★★★

£649 inc VAT

Most desktop replacement notebooks aren't goliaths like Toshiba's Qosmio on page 20. This slender model from Gateway is only a touch heavier than many 15.4in notebooks. However, it has a larger 17in screen and a numeric keypad.

Compared to a 15.4in display, this 17in screen is obviously better for watching DVDs, simply because of its greater size. It also has a high native resolution of 1,440x900 pixels. This gives you around 26 per cent more screen space than most 15.4in displays, which is very handy when using applications that have lots of windows and toolbars.

The MX8716b has a good display for a notebook at this price. It's fairly bright and evenly lit, and whites are displayed without any coloured tint. Our greyscale test wasn't displayed perfectly, but we've seen far worse from budget notebooks. It's a good display for the money, and shouldn't hamper you in any task.

The notebook's chassis looks far more stylish than its price would suggest. It also feels robust and doesn't flex when put under pressure. The keyboard, however, flexes when you type. This deadens the feedback you get from your keystrokes, which tends to slow you down and cause you to make mistakes. The touch pad has a nice slick surface and the buttons are slightly recessed so you don't catch them accidentally.

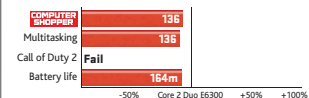
The speakers on the front of the notebook are better than most built-in ones. They don't sound muffled and are capable of a reasonable volume, although they tend to distort when turned right up. If you really want to enjoy your music you'll still need to buy a decent set of speakers.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Big display
- ✓ Fairly slender
- ✗ Poor keyboard

NOTEBOOK PC 1.73GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T5300, 2GB RAM, 120GB hard disk, Intel GMA 950 graphics, DVD+/-RW +/-DL drive, 17in LCD widescreen, 3.1kg
PART CODE 200-1511
SUPPLIER <http://direct.tesco.com>
08456 004411
DETAILS <http://uk.gateway.com>

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



It has all the ports you're ever likely to need, with four USB2, FireWire, a memory card reader and a CardBus slot. There's no digital video output, though, with just D-sub and S-video instead.

Inside the chassis a 120GB hard disk provides adequate storage, although it's a pity that a larger 160GB disk wasn't fitted. It comes with Windows Vista Home Premium installed, which includes extras such as the Aero 3D desktop and Windows Media Center that aren't in the Home Basic version.

The MX8716b performed respectably in our benchmarks. However, it isn't noticeably quicker than many notebooks in this month's

notebooks Labs test (see page 74). In our light usage battery test the MX8716b managed a respectable two hours and 44 minutes, which is enough for a couple of hours of web surfing. The integrated Intel graphics chipset isn't suitable for games.

This notebook has a nice display and it feels well made, which is a good basis for an award-winning notebook. However, the keyboard could be better and our £500 notebooks in this month's Labs have near identical performance.

Seth Barton

Also consider...

ACER Aspire 5101AWLMi

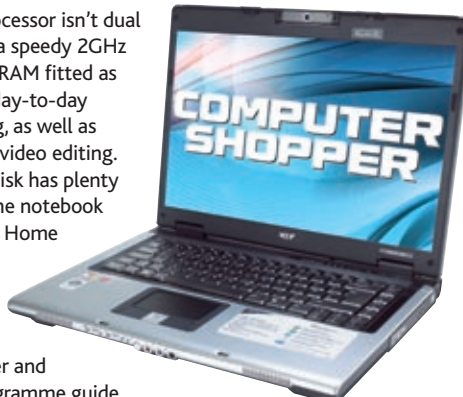
★★★★★

£400 inc VAT

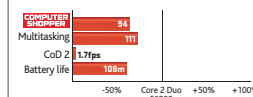
This notebook's processor isn't dual core, but it runs at a speedy 2GHz and there's 1GB of RAM fitted as well. It's easily capable of day-to-day tasks such as web browsing, as well as straightforward photo and video editing.

The large 120GB hard disk has plenty of space for big files, and the notebook comes with Windows Vista Home Premium installed. This includes Windows Media Center, so you can browse your media files with ease, or add a TV tuner and use the free electronic programme guide. There's also a DVD writer for making backups and burning home movies.

You'll be able to enjoy photos and videos to the full thanks to the excellent widescreen display. It's bright



NOTEBOOK PC 2GHz AMD Turion 64 MK-36, 1GB RAM, 120GB hard disk, ATI Radeon Xpress 1100 graphics, DVD+/-RW +/-DL drive, 15.4in LCD widescreen, 2.7kg
SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.acer.co.uk
PART CODE LX.AX90X.017
✓ Fast for a budget notebook; DVD writer; big hard disk ✗ Poor battery life FULL REVIEW Jul 2007



and has good contrast, plus there's a built-in webcam for video chat sessions. This is a great budget notebook at an excellent price.

MEDION

Maximum Performance Multimedia PC

★★★★★

£550 inc VAT



Now that Windows Media Center comes as part of Windows Vista Home Premium, you could be mistaken for thinking that most Vista PCs are media centres. However, a remote control and a TV tuner are still necessary.

Medion's Maximum Performance Multimedia PC doesn't have a monitor but comes with both a remote control and a TV card. Its mini-tower chassis isn't designed for life beneath your TV. This kind of PC is better off hidden away in a corner, and you'll need to invest in some long cables to connect it to your TV.

The bundled remote control uses an RF signal rather than infrared, so it works at long distances and doesn't require line of sight. We tested it in our labs and it worked from round a corner 15m away from the PC. However, the lack of infrared means this PC can't control an external set-top box.

The Nvidia GeForce 8500GT graphics card is not very quick in 3D games, although modern titles will run smoothly at low detail settings. More importantly, it has an HDMI output that's ideal for connecting to an HD TV. The output supports HDCP so you won't have any copy protection issues in the future. It also carries audio, so you won't have to run two cables to an HDMI-equipped TV.

The PC comes with both a DVD writer and a DVD-ROM. The graphics card and Intel Core 2 Duo E6750 processor are powerful enough to play HD movies from HD DVD and Blu-ray discs. You could always add the appropriate optical drive later when prices fall.



A sliding panel below the optical drives hides a range of useful ports. There's a memory card reader with support for every common format, four- and six-pin FireWire ports, plus phono, composite and S-video inputs for capturing analogue video. The last three are routed to the PCI hybrid TV tuner, which works with Media Center to let you pause and record TV programmes. It's only a single tuner, so you can't record one programme while watching another.

A big 500GB hard disk gives you plenty of space for recording TV. The fast processor and 2GB of RAM will make short work of any tasks you need to undertake.

The Multimedia PC is well-thought out and competitively priced. If you're looking for a cheap Media Center PC for your home entertainment network, this is a great choice. It's only on sale from Tesco and stock could be limited, so don't dawdle if you want one.

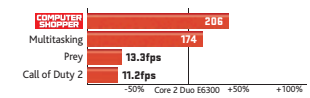
Seth Barton

SUMMARY

- ✓ Powerful enough for HD video
- ✓ HDMI output and RF remote
- ✗ Single tuner TV card

MEDIA CENTER PC 2.66GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E6750, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 256MB Nvidia GeForce 8500GT graphics, DVD+/-RW +/-DL drive
PART CODE 6486
SUPPLIER <http://direct.tesco.com>
08456 004411
DETAILS www.medion.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



BYTE SIZE

LOGITECH MX Revolution

★★★★★

£53 inc VAT



Logitech's MX Revolution is a sleek cordless mouse. It connects to your PC using a small USB dongle and recharges its non-replaceable battery using the included cradle.

Its distinguishing feature is the scroll wheel, which can spin freely with a flick of a finger for several seconds, allowing rapid scrolling through documents. You can also scroll through documents line by line. You can switch between modes automatically or by pressing the wheel.

Text in documents can be searched by highlighting it and pressing the search button. The Revolution is very responsive and comfortable with some useful features. It is expensive, but it's a great cordless mouse.

Alan Lu

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.logitech.com

GENIUS Traveler 355

★★★★★

£25 inc VAT

Genius's Traveler 355 USB laser mouse for notebooks uses an optical sensor in place of a mechanical scroll wheel for quickly scrolling through documents. It's no more or less accurate than a regular scroll wheel, but it's easier to clean as there aren't any moving parts. Pressing the sensor switches from 800dpi to 1,600dpi mode, making it more responsive in games.

The 355 is easy to hold thanks to its rubber-coated sides. It's snug enough for occasional use, but its small size makes it uncomfortable to hold for extended periods. The 355 is a decent alternative to a poor touch pad and its optical scroll sensor is attractive if you have grubby fingers.

Alan Lu

SUPPLIER www.lambda-tek.com
DETAILS www.geniusnet.co.uk



LENOVO ThinkPad X60s

★★★★★

£1,178 inc VAT



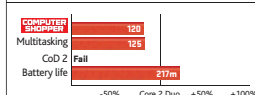
This ThinkPad's black chassis is light, slender and looks business-like. Despite being small and slim, though, it's very sturdy and should take a few knocks. The display has an anti-glare finish so you can work in most lighting conditions. Lenovo has included a built-in a 3G data card for fast mobile internet; however, you will need a monthly contract from a network provider.

It did surprisingly well in our benchmarks despite its low-voltage processor, and the small battery lasted for half a working day in our light usage test. If you need a longer battery life then Lenovo has a range of larger alternatives.



ULTRA-PORTABLE NOTEBOOK

Intel Core Duo L2400, 1GB RAM, 80GB disk, Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 950 graphics, no optical drive, 12.1in LCD, 1.3kg
SUPPLIER www.laptopsdirect.co.uk
DETAILS www.lenovo.co.uk
PART CODE UK16DUK
✓ Lightweight; built-in 3G ✗ No optical drive FULL REVIEW Jul 2007



The keyboard is great for typing documents on the move, and there's a fingerprint reader for security. If you need an ultra-portable notebook for office work, this is the best choice.

BYTE SIZE

APC SurgeArrest BE325-UK

★★
£44 inc VAT



APC's SurgeArrest BE325-UK is an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). In the event of a power cut, the BE325-UK's battery will keep your PC running so you can save any open work and shut down safely. It will also protect your PC against brownouts and power surges.

The UPS has two battery backup and two surge protection sockets, as well as surge protection sockets for your phone line and Ethernet network. However, it performed poorly in our tests, keeping our PC going for just over a minute at idle, which is barely enough time to save your work. We'd recommend spending £20 more on APC's more powerful Back-UPS ES 700VA (*Labs, Shopper* September 2007).

Chris Finnamore

SUPPLIER www.lambda-tek.com

KINGSTON 2GB Ultra LL HyperX

★★★
£127 inc VAT



Kingston's 2GB Ultra LL HyperX consists of two matched 1GB DDR2 memory modules, which are rated to run at ultra-low CAS 3 latencies. The modules are rated at 800MHz, so are suitable for motherboards that work with DDR2-800 or PC2 6400 memory.

We tested the modules on a test PC with a quad-core Intel Core 2 Extreme QX6700 processor. When fitted with CAS 5 DDR2-800 memory, the PC managed 112 in our audio-encoding benchmark and 399 in video encoding. With the low-latency Kingston modules, the PC's scores increased to 123 in audio and 409 in video.

This is a very fast matched RAM pair, but it's £50 more expensive than a standard 2GB DDR2-800 kit.

Chris Finnamore

SUPPLIER www.lambda-tek.com
DETAILS www.kingston.com

CYBERPOWER Media Centre 900 Series

★★★★
£845 inc VAT

Media centre PCs equipped with a Blu-ray or HD DVD drive tend to be very expensive, so we were surprised that CyberPower's Media Centre 900 PC costs less than £850. Unfortunately, however, too many compromises have been made to accommodate the Blu-ray drive and keep the purchase price low.

The built-in Blu-ray drive can read and write Blu-ray discs. However, the 900 struggled to play our Blu-ray movies without dropping frames due to the lack of a dedicated graphics card. This is disappointing, since smooth Blu-ray playback could be achieved simply by adding an HDMI-equipped graphics card for as little as £70.

You should have no trouble recording hours of TV programmes for later viewing thanks to the built-in hybrid TV tuner and the two spacious 500GB hard disks. By default, one is set up to store your media files and the other for storing your programs and Windows installation, but you can configure them as a RAID 0 or 1 array if you wish. Oddly, no keyboard or mouse is included.

Disappointingly, the 900 has only a meagre of selection of ports despite its large and imposing mid-tower sized case. An HDMI port for connecting a high-definition TV is present, but while there's a standard TV-out port, no S-video or component adaptors are included in the box. There's no SCART video out or S/PDIF ports for connecting a surround-sound amplifier, either. You can connect a set of 7.1 surround-sound speakers and the front-mounted display shows useful information such as the music track currently playing.



As our benchmark results show, the 900 is more than powerful enough for use as your main PC. As expected, the integrated Radeon X1200 graphics chip isn't powerful enough to play the latest 3D games, although less-demanding titles should be playable. You can easily add a long PCI Express graphics card, but there's not enough room for a double-width card or one with a particularly large fan.

If you need even more hard disk space to store your media files, there are four empty drive bays but only one free SATA and one free PATA port. You could add a SATA controller to the single spare PCI slot, but if you then want to add another TV tuner, you'll have to opt for a PCI-E x1 or USB model.

CyberPower's Media Centre 900 is an unevenly specified PC. Its Blu-ray playback is hobbled by the lack of a dedicated graphics card, it has a meagre selection of ports despite its huge case and it doesn't have enough SATA ports for all its drive bays. These problems mean that the Media Centre 900 isn't very good value.

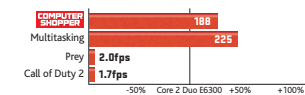
Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Plenty of hard disk space
- ✗ Jittery Blu-ray playback
- ✗ Huge case

DESKTOP PC 2.8GHz AMD Athlon 64 X2 5600+, 2GB RAM, 2x 500GB hard disks, integrated ATI Radeon X1200 graphics, BD-R/RE DVD+/-RW +/-DL
PART CODE N/A
SUPPLIER CyberPower 08000 190863
DETAILS www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



Also consider...

ROCK Meivo

★★★★★
£1,171 inc VAT

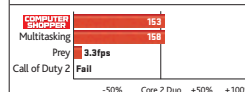
Rock's Meivo all-in-one PC only takes up a bit more space than a standalone 22in monitor. Its 1,680x1,050 resolution isn't quite enough to show 1080p high-definition video, but it's still watchable from across a small room.

The Meivo can handle all but the most strenuous tasks thanks to its 2GB of RAM and fast Core 2 Duo E6300 processor. Unfortunately, the Meivo's integrated Intel graphics chip isn't up to playing the latest 3D games. It couldn't run our Call of Duty 2 test, although older titles should be playable. You can watch and record either analogue or digital TV broadcasts using the built-in hybrid TV tuner.



ALL-IN-ONE PC 1.86GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E6300, 2GB RAM, 250GB hard disk, Intel GMA 3000 graphics, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD, hybrid TV tuner
SUPPLIER Rock 08456 880556
DETAILS www.meivo.tv

✓ Compact and upgradable; high-resolution screen ✗ Not suitable for games FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



Many all-in-one computers tend to be difficult or impossible to upgrade, but many of the Meivo's internal components, such as the mini PCI slots and 3½in hard disk, are easily accessible. There's even an ExpressCard/54 slot.

The Meivo isn't suitable for gamers, but if you need a compact, fast and easily upgradable PC, the Meivo is an excellent choice.

MESH Elite E6600 R600



£1,289 inc VAT

The cases used by Mesh for its computers may not change often, but the technology used inside them certainly does. The Elite E6600 R600 comes equipped with ATI's latest graphics card, the high-end Radeon HD2900XT. While it's a good PC in its own right, it isn't as good value as other HD2900XT-equipped computers we've seen.

As our 3D benchmark scores show, the Elite has no trouble playing demanding 3D games at high resolutions with detailed graphics settings enabled. You'll also be able to play upcoming DirectX 10 games. The Elite also did very well in our 2D application benchmarks, with high scores of 261 and 202 in our video- and image-editing tests respectively.

The 22in widescreen monitor has a native resolution of 1,680x1,050 pixels, which gives you a spacious Windows desktop on which to work. Image quality is slightly disappointing, though. While it's fine for watching DVDs, it's flawed for image editing and we'd expect more from a monitor included with a PC at this price. Areas of pure white were displayed brightly and consistently and it has decent viewing angles. Unfortunately, there was noticeable banding in our greyscale and colour transitions tests.

The motherboard has a second PCI Express x16 slot so you can add another ATI graphics card in CrossFire mode for even better 3D performance if you wish. Doing so would block off one of



the three empty PCI slots, though. You won't need to add wireless networking, FireWire or eSATA adaptors, however, as these are already integrated into the motherboard.

If the roomy 500GB hard disk isn't spacious enough for your needs, you can add three more hard disks. You can choose to configure them as a RAID 0, 1 or 10 arrays. There's also room for three more optical drives and a floppy drive. You won't need to add a memory card reader as one is already built in.

Gamers will appreciate the 5.1 surround-sound Creative speakers. They're good enough for watching DVDs and gaming, but they sound woolly and muffled, so music fans may want to invest in a better set. While the wireless mouse is fine for everyday use, the spongy keyboard can be tiresome to type on and dedicated gamers may want more responsive USB models.

The three-year onsite warranty is generous, but if you need a fast DirectX 10-compatible gaming PC, RL Supplies' Modula 400 OC (see 'Also consider...', below), is cheaper. CyberPower's Infinity Crossfire GT (reviewed last month) has a RAID array, an EAX-compatible sound card and a better keyboard and mouse, but is £90 less than the Elite.

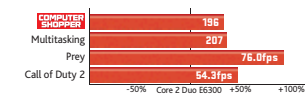
Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast in Windows and games
- ✓ Lengthy warranty
- ✗ Better-value PCs are available

DESKTOP PC 2.4GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E6600, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 512MB ATI Radeon HD2900XT, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD
PART CODE N/A
SUPPLIER Mesh 08447 360440
DETAILS www.meshcomputers.com

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



BYTE SIZE

NOVA Killer



£19 inc VAT



£19 might seem to be a lot to pay for a mouse mat, but if you're serious about your gaming, the Nova Killer is a worthwhile investment. Measuring 320x320mm, it provides enough room for the sweeping circular motions demanded by most first-person shooters. A shorter flat edge allows it be placed flush against the edge of a keyboard.

Its texture allows the mouse to glide smoothly, and its edges are designed so you can feel when you're nearing them. The base clings securely to most surfaces, and its cushioned texture and 3mm thickness make it comfortable to use during even the longest gaming sessions. If you play a lot of games, this is a great way to give you an edge over your opponents.

Kat Orphanides

SUPPLIER www.zeeshop.co.uk
DETAILS www.esportnova.com

SPEED-LINK Media Centre Controlboard



£40 inc VAT

Speed-Link's Media Centre Controlboard is a wireless USB keyboard with an integrated trackball, designed to control your media centre PC from the comfort of your sofa.

It has a range of hotkeys for audio and video playback, web browsing and channel surfing, and drivers allow it to integrate with Windows Media Center, My HTPC, Power Cinema and TV Central software.

Unfortunately, it is very uncomfortable to type on, and the trackball is oversensitive. This can make even simple tasks a frustrating experience. The Media Centre Controlboard is an expensive remote control and an unimpressive keyboard.

Kat Orphanides

SUPPLIER www.play.com
DETAILS www.speed-link.com



RL SUPPLIES Modula 4400 OC



£800 inc VAT



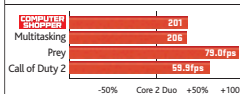
If you're looking for a cheap gaming PC, RL Supplies' Modula 4400 OC could be just what you want. It comes with a large 22in widescreen monitor, which is the perfect size for playing the latest games.

It didn't do so well in our demanding image tests, however, so you'll need a better-quality monitor for tasks such as image-editing work.

The GeForce 8800GTS graphics card is superb and handles all today's games at high resolutions and detail settings. It's DirectX 10-compatible, too, so you'll be able to play newer games that require this technology when they become available. It achieved



DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E4400, 2GB RAM, 320GB hard disk, 640MB BFG Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Modula 400 OC
SUPPLIER RL Supplies
01923 896996
DETAILS www.rlsupplies.co.uk
✓ Fast in 3D, including DirectX 10; SLI motherboard ✗ Monitor could use more contrast FULL REVIEW Sep 2007



the highest scores in our Prey and Call of Duty 2 benchmarks in our recent group test of gaming PCs. With a fast Core 2 Duo E4400 processor and 2GB of RAM, the Modula is great for other intensive tasks, such as video editing, too.

With a large monitor, great speakers, a fast graphics card and a sensible keyboard and mouse, the Modula is a great gaming PC.

BYTE SIZE

2P G4 Slim Mouse

★★★
£25 inc VAT

2P's USB G4 Slim Mouse slides into your notebook's PC Card slot for storage and can be converted to a full mouse when removed. It looks amazing, but it's fiddly to use. The USB cable has to be unwound from its coil, then the top has to be spun round to create an arch for a hand-rest, and the section with the buttons has to be adjusted to fit your hand. It takes a while to get into shape, which isn't helped by the button section constantly falling off.

Even worse, the four tiny screws that keep the two main parts together dropped out of our review model, and it took us ages to screw it back together. It's a great idea, but the poor quality of our sample puts us off.

David Ludlow

SUPPLIER www.gadget-box.com
DETAILS www.slim-mouse.com

AKASA Cable Ties

★★★★★
£3.99 inc VAT



Cable ties are a great way of keeping the inside of your PC uncluttered and making sure that there's unobstructed airflow through a case for cooling. They can also be annoying if you want to free cables to do some work, and often end up having to be cut. With Akasa's Cable Ties, you'll no longer have this problem.

The pack includes five Velcro-fastening ties, so you can keep cables out of the way but also free them when you need them. They are long, so you can tie any amount of cables to any case, and are incredibly easy to untie when you need access to your cables.

Best of all, they're just £3.99 for a pack, providing enough ties for even the biggest of cases, so you can finally say goodbye to irritating plastic ties.

David Ludlow

SUPPLIER www.ebuyer.com
DETAILS www.akasa.com

CHOOSING A... PC System

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

PROCESSOR Intel Pentium D 820
MEMORY 1GB
HARD DISK 250GB
STORAGE 16x DVD writer
SOUND Integrated
SPEAKERS Stereo
GRAPHICS Integrated
MONITOR 19in LCD
EXTRAS 56K modem
CONNECTORS 4x USB2, network
SOFTWARE Windows Vista Home Premium
BASICS Keyboard, mouse
Recommended minimum in grey

1 The minimum specification of PC we recommend, shown in grey above, is a good starting point when working out your ideal system. This PC would cost around £500 and is perfectly capable of running everyday office, multimedia or education software, as well as doing anything on the internet. But it's an unexciting PC. It will be able to play DVD movies, but they won't sound too impressive and modern games are a no-no.

2 The size and shape of a PC is more important than it used to be. A mini PC costs a bit more and it's less upgradable, but it will take up less desk space and look much more attractive. If you're choosing a media centre PC, make sure you get one that fits in with any other electronic equipment in your living room and that it's quiet.

3 If you are interested in games, upgrade to a decent graphics card. Budget cards based on the GeForce 7300 GT graphics processor or Radeon X1600 will cope with this year's games, but to play next year's just as smoothly (and enjoy gorgeous graphics today), you'll want anything up to a GeForce 8800 GTX or Radeon X1900XTX.

Look for an SLI or CrossFire system if you want to use two graphics cards to get the best graphics performance. Even if you don't want SLI or CrossFire now, it may be worth getting a system that's capable of being upgraded later.

4 The processor above is powerful and it's dual core, so it will handle intensive tasks. If you're going to be doing a lot of video editing, you should consider upgrading to an even more powerful processor. Intel's Core 2 Duo range is our current top choice; as well as being more powerful, it needs less cooling so your PC should be quieter.

5 If you're not interested in games, you can definitely live with integrated or cheap graphics, but there are plenty more reasons to upgrade the memory, hard disk or processor. If you'll be using your PC for serious desktop publishing, music or photo-editing tasks, you need the same kind of processor, memory and disk space as for games. For video editing consider getting two hard disks, perhaps in a RAID array.

6 A quality sound system will enhance all manner of

PC activities. To hear the surround soundtrack of a DVD at its best, you'll need a quality 5.1 speaker system. Games can also use such a system to throw sound effects around you.

If you're not interested in games or DVDs (or you don't want to trail wires all around the room), go for a quality stereo pair with a subwoofer to boost the bass instead.

If you're interested in music or want better-quality sound, you'll need to invest in a dedicated sound card. As well as providing enhanced sound, such as Environmental Audio eXtension (EAX), which tweaks the acoustics to make sound appear to be playing in different environments, you'll get higher-quality outputs and more inputs.

7 Seventeen-inch LCDs are inexpensive, but not very exciting and quite small. A 19in LCD is now standard and has the same resolution (1,280x1,024) but is easier on the eye. Twenty-inch LCDs are available from around £200 and have a higher resolution (1,600x1,200). This makes them better for those who want to edit large photos, documents or spreadsheets.

If you're more interested in entertainment, consider a widescreen monitor. As well as being ideally suited for watching movies, they give you more room horizontally, so you can work on two documents side by side.

Decide if you want a glossy display or not. Glossy displays improve contrast and make images look brighter, but they reflect overhead lights and sunlight easily, which can be annoying.

8 The standard set of connectors can be improved with extra USB2 ports, to which most run-of-the-mill PC gadgets attach, and a FireWire port for fancy gadgets including most digital video (DV) cameras. Look for a memory card reader if you have a digital camera and make sure your camera's memory card is supported.

9 Windows Vista Home Premium is preinstalled on most new PCs. Any extra software bundled should be assessed critically. It may be that you'll never use it. But you may happen across a PC that includes software you'd otherwise have paid for; you'll save lots of money by having it preloaded, although you won't get technical support included.

10 If you have money left over, consider a TV card. This lets you watch TV on your PC screen and record programmes to your hard disk, or capture analogue video from a camcorder.

